

**Testimony Given By Paula M. Colen, Executive Director of EASTCONN -
March 23, 2009**

Good afternoon. I am Paula Colen, Executive Director of EASTCONN, one of the six Regional Educational Service Centers in Connecticut. With me is Nancy Celentano who has been coordinating services to Beginning Teachers and Mentors for over twenty years. We are here today to provide testimony on **Bill #6686 – The Teacher Education and Mentoring Program.**

We commend the Committee for putting forth this Bill which will provide much needed support to Beginning Teachers in the initial years of their teaching careers. Research indicates that comprehensive induction programs have a significant impact on the development of teacher knowledge and skills, student learning and retention of teachers which provides for continuity of instruction and cost savings to districts. In fact, for every dollar invested, there is a dollar sixty cost savings to the district (recruiting, hiring and training).

Bill #6686 promotes essential collaboration between key stakeholders in supporting Beginning Teachers, the State Department of Education, School Districts, Regional Educational Service Centers, Institutions of Higher Education, Bargaining Units, and professional organizations. All of these constituencies agree that, regardless of the quality of the pre-service education, nothing can adequately prepare teachers for the challenges of their own classrooms. We need a strong mentoring program if we are to provide the highest quality education to all students in Connecticut public schools. Research shows that teacher quality is one of the most significant variables in promoting student learning and is, therefore, essential as we strive to close the achievement gap in Connecticut.

We believe the strength of the program is that it addresses and provides for Beginning Teacher support, professional development for mentors and Beginning Teachers, critical infrastructure and the financial resources needed to positively impact student learning. Without this program, module development, mentor training, on-site technical assistance, data systems to access resources and other tools would not be available uniformly across all districts. As we move forward it is important that we continue to search for creative ways to take the logistical and financial burden off of districts while helping them to successfully induct new teachers.

In order for this program to be successful, sufficient funding must be available for development, implementation, monitoring and program evaluation. Without these state resources, both programmatically and fiscally, this type of assistance would not be possible in an equitable fashion across the State.

I would like to thank the Committee for considering this Bill since it is our students who benefit from high caliber teaching. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Paula M. Colen
Executive Director, EASTCONN